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THE

CASE

OF THE

Abjuration Oath

Endeavoured to be Cleared,

To the Satisfaction of those who are Required to take it. not

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Abjuration Oath,

Endeavoured to be cleared to the Satisfaction of thoſe who are Required to take it.

Q. GOOD morrow Sir, I was deſired by a Kinſman of mine, of a certain *Houſe* you know, to enquire (underhand as it were) whether you intended to take the *Abjuration-Oath*, or no: and I am glad I have met you, to know your mind in that matter.

A. Why ſhould your Kinſman doubt of it, pray? Was not that Oath made to be taken by Men of *Places*?

Q. Truly, I think I heard him talk, as if the Oath were made to be taken, by ſuch as *were to come into Places*; but that thoſe who *had Places already*

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were at liberty *not* to take it, and would thereby answer the Design of ——

A. Your Kinsman, without doubt, Sir, to whom I desire to be commended; with the hopes of living to see him hanged, tho' he were of a better House than he is. Tell him a true *English* Gentleman may be better employed, than in annoying his Fellow-Subjects, and laying Snares for honest and well meaning Men, under pretence of securing his *Prince*, and serving his *Country*. He is an understanding Man, and will know what I mean. But, in answer to your present Question, tell him (underhand, as it were) that I intend to take the Oath, keep my Office, and break his heart.

Q. I perceive you are in some heat, and therefore I won't go on, to tell you what my Kinsman said farther. But you shall give me leave, now we are met, to talk over this matter seriously, since I am my self, you know, a little concern'd, by the small *Place* I hold under the Government. Have you considered the Oath we are to take, for there are some things in it *New*, in which I want to be a little instructed? *First*, we acknowledge the Queen to be the *Lawful* and *Rightful* Queen of this Realm, *&c. Secondly*, we declare we believe in our Conscience, that the Pretended Prince of *Wales* hath not any Right or Title *whatsoever* to this Realm, *&c. Thirdly*, we Renounce, Refuse, and *Abjure*, any Allegiance or Obedience to Him. *Lastly*, we say we make this Recognition, Acknowledgment, Abjuration, Renunciation, and Promise, heartily and *willingly*. I have something to offer, if you please, upon each of these Heads; and under the *First*, I desire to know what we must understand by *Rightful*.

A. I

A. I understand by *Rightful*, neither more nor less than *Lawful*: A *Rightful* and a *Lawful* Prince, is, to me, a Prince that hath all the *Right* to the Subjects Allegiance and Obedience that the *Laws* of the Land give Him.

Q. What need was there then, of saying that by *Two* Words, which might be signified by *One*?

A. No need at all, but that Lawyers, when they make *Oaths*, think they are drawing *Leases*. When the King in his Coronation-Oath, swears he will, in all his Judgments, administer *Equity*, *Right*, and *Justice*, do you think he intends to distinguish between *Right* and *Justice*? Or is there any difference between Right and Justice? When a Man swears he will *fulfill*, *perform*, and *execute* a Bargain, or Office, does he intend, think you, to do so many several things? when he *fulfils* his Promise, does he not *perform* it? when he has truly *performed* his Bargain, has he not truly *executed it*? but Men seek to have their Minds *assured* by repetition of things that look like somewhat, but are truly nothing to the securing their main purpose. What think you of *ejecting*, *expelling*, *amoving*, and *putting-out* a Tenant that keeps not Covenants? with a thousand such like Expressions, to be found in every Law-Book; Is not all our common Discourse, are not all Histories, and indeed all Books, full of such *Tautology*? And tho' Oaths, of all things in the World, ought to be freest from it, yet when they come to take up half a Sheet of Paper, and are made by Men of Subtlety, they can hardly avoid it. So that if you have nothing else to determine you to make a difference betwixt *Rightful* and *Lawful*, but that they are *two* words, you may very easily believe they mean the *same* thing. *Q.* But,

Q. But, pray, were not *Rightful* and *Lawful*, the very words used in the Oath of *Allegiance*, made to *King James the First*, and were they not used to signify his *Hereditary Right*, as well as his *Possessory* one? and may they not now be used in the *Abjuration Oath*, to the like purpose?

A. I remember to have read in *Fabian*'s Chronicle (who lived and wrote in the time of *Henry* VII. and died in 1512) that Sir *Thomas Dymock* the Champion, came into *Westminster-Hall*, at the Coronation of *Henry* IV. and there challenged any one, who should affirm that *King Henry was not Ryghtful Enherytour of the Crown of England, and Ryghtfully Crowned:* by which he could not possibly mean, that he was *next in Blood* to the preceding Kings; for every Body knew the contrary, and *Mortymer* was generally known to be the next by *lineal* Succession, tho' then but seven years old: And tho' he claimed, by *Blanch* his Mother, from *Henry* III. yet could he not be *Rightful* Inheritor of the Crown, upon that score, unless both *Edw.* I. *Edw.* II. *Edw.* III. and *Rich.* II. were all of them *wrongful* Possessors, which I think he would not venture to say; it being certain that *Edmund Crouchback* was younger by six years than *Edward* I. By all which I intend only to say, that by *Rightful* could not be meant the *next in blood*. But, not to trouble you with these old Stories —— I say directly, that whatever the Parliament of *James* I. meant by Rightful, the Present Parliament that framed the *Abjuration Oath*, could by no means intend by the Word *Rightful*, to mean an *Hereditary* Right, by the way of *Succession*.

Q. How does that appear?

A. Be-

A. Because this *Abjuration Oath* was made to King *William* the Third, who could not possibly have an *Hereditary* Right to the Crown of *England* whilst *Mary* his Queen, and *Her present Majesty* were alive.

Q. Pray what *did* they mean, then, by that Word?

A. Remember *first*, what they neither *did*, nor *could*, mean by it: and that will ease your mind of one Scruple, that has, I perceive, risen in it; as if by acknowledging a Prince to be *Rightful*, we thereby acknowledged a *Right* by *Blood*. Remember *secondly*, that the Parliament which framed and imposed this *Abjuration Oath*, has not told us what they mean by *Rightful*, and therefore have left us to explain it, by *Lawful*, if there be no Incongruity or Inconsistency in doing so. Would they not hereby give the People to understand, that when the *States* of the Kingdom, being pressed by the most violent Necessities, have pitched upon a Prince to sit upon the Throne, and freely chosen him for their King, the People of that Kingdom are obliged to pay their Allegiance and Obedience to him? The Laws of the Kingdom run in the Name of such a King; command Obedience to Him; punish the Disobedient; and know no other King but Him. Is not this a *Lawful* King? And tho' he might have no Right *before* he was thus Chosen, Crowned, and Submitted to, by the Estates of the Kingdom, yet, *after* that, may he not have a full Right to all the Allegiance and Obedience of the Subjects, that the Laws and Constitutions of that Kingdom, in such case give Him? Do you not think the King of *Poland* is as *Rightful* and *Lawful* a King, when duly Elected, Crowned, and Sworn, according to

that

that Country's Customs, as any other King in the World, where the Crown is *Hereditary*?

Q. Yes, because Rightful and Lawful, do *there* respect the due Election, Coronation, and Admission of such Prince: but in *Hereditary* Kingdoms, they respect *Proximity of Blood*, and the next of Kin.

A. Then have we had no *Rightful Kings* of *England*, but such as came to the Crown by *Lineal Descent*: And I'll assure you then, we must part with a great many since the Conquest, whom yet the Nation has submitted to, and sworn Allegiance to, as Kings, and all along accounted true Kings. The Parliament (you know) desired *Richard* the Third to accept the Crown, *as to Him of Right belonging, as well by Inheritance, as by Lawful Election.* You see they thought a Prince might have a Right to the Crown by *Lawful Election* as well as by *Inheritance*; and therefore if they had call'd him a *Rightful* King, with regard to *Lawful Election*, where had been the Absurdity? that which I have no Right to, *before* it be conferr'd on me by those who have it in their Power, I have a Right to, when it *is* once conferred: And tho' I might not be a *Rightful Claimer*, yet I may be a *Rightful Possessor.* Unless it be made evident, that the Right by *Birth*, cannot, or ought not to be defeated by any Powers on Earth, for any Considerations whatever, even for the Preservation of a numerous People from Ruine and Destruction. Unless this can be made good, it will follow that He who is not the *Right Heir* to the Crown, may yet become a *Rightful King*, to the setting aside the Right Heir. But the present Parliament, you see, have had no respect to *Proximity of Blood*, and yet have called King *William* a *Rightful* King; and therefore you may understand

ſtand it in ſome other ſenſe; but in that, which you moſt fear, you cannot take or underſtand it.

Q. But at this rate it ſhould ſeem, that a King *de facto* is as *Rightful* a King as a King *de jure*.

A. Altogether, with reſpect to the *People*; He has as full a Right to their Allegiance, Service, and Obedience, as if He had been the Right Heir *by Blood*. The Law makes, and knows no difference betwixt the Kings *Elected*, Crown'd, and Sworn to, and thoſe who ſucceed to the ſame Honour by *Deſcent*. They come to the Throne by different ways, but when they are ſeated there, they have equal Right to the Subjects Duty. The Eſtates of the Kingdom are to look to themſelves, in conſidering what Neceſſities are great enough to juſtifie the Changes they are making, for they will certainly be accountable to God in their Private Perſons, for all that proceeds from Hatred, and Revenge, and Intereſt, and Ambition.

Q. Then if I had taken this Oath to King *William* I had ſworn, that I believ'd, ſince the Eſtates of the Kingdom finding themſelves under the greateſt Straits, had choſen Him King, Crown'd Him, and given their Faith to Him, I was by the Laws of the Land oblig'd to acknowledge Him King, and that He had a Right to the Allegiance of the Subjects of this Nation. But this I could not have done with ſo perfect Satisfaction, unleſs I alſo (for my own part) believ'd, that, preſuming the Neceſſities of a Nation to be truly ſtrong and violent, the *Eſtates* of it muſt needs have a Power of preſerving themſelves, by going out of the Common Way, and doing ſomething extraordinary and unuſual, when the ordinary Methods fail them. Theſe Reaſons, I hope, will juſtifie my acknowledging King *William* to be *Right-*

ful and Lawful King of *England*. I am somewhat more suspicious of my Clearness, in the *Second* Article, wherein *I acknowledge that I believe in my Conscience, that the P. P. of* Wales, *hath not any Right or Title whatsoever to these Realms*. Now suppose I should believe him to be indeed the Son of the late King *James*, how can I say in my Conscience, He has no Right or Title *whatsoever* to the Crown, since the eldest Son of a King, has always been thought to have at least a Title to his Father's Dominions, in all Hereditary Kingdoms?

A. You are one, who have taken already the Oath of Allegiance to King *William*, and by that means excluded the Right and Title of the P. P. of *Wales* as far as in you lay; how could you do that, unless you thought the same Necessity and the same Power, which made him King, could also exclude the *Other*? you acknowledge the Present *Possessor* of the Throne to be *Rightful* and *Lawful* King; whilst he is so, no other can have any Right or Title to your Allegiance. The Princess of *Denmark* is now also upon the Throne, by the same Parliamentary Provision; the Estates of the Kingdom have submitted to Her, and sworn Allegiance to Her, and moreover recognized Her *Rightful* and *Lawful* Queen; the Laws of the Land acknowledg Her Authority; run in Her Name; require the Subjects to obey Her; and punish the Disobedient as Rebels. What would you more? The same Powers have also setled the Succession in the Protestant Line for ever? they have excluded all Papists from ever sitting on the English Throne: If the P. P. of *Wales* be a Papist, he is, you see for ever excluded (let him be never so much King *James*'s Son) upon that score. This is effectu-

ally

ally to take away all Right and Title *whatsoever* to the Realms of *England*, &c. Your Business now is, to be satisfied that when there is a strong and absolute Necessity of making Changes, of setting by one Person, and substituting another, the Estates of the Kingdom (who are to be Judges when this Necessity comes upon them) are naturally invested with this Power. And since I now speak to a Man, who believes the P. P. of *Wales* to be the only Son of the late King *James*, and yet *has* taken the Oath of Allegiance to the late King *William* and Queen *Mary*, and *will* to her Present Majesty—— I desire to know upon what grounds he can do this, which will not also bear the excluding the P. P. of *Wales*, for ever? If the Parliament had Power to set by the Right and Title of the P. P. of *Wales*, during the Government of King *William*, and of Her *present Majesty*, why not for twenty Reigns longer, why not for ever? But you your self have acknowledged this Power, by submitting, and swearing Allegiance twice, to the defeating the Right and Title (as you believe) of the P. P. why may you not do so, if you should live a hundred years longer? If you are satisfied with what you have already done, why may you not continue to do the like.

Q. Why, being told by Learned Men, and Learned Books, that the Laws of the Land requir'd, and would bear out, the Subjects taking the Oath of Allegiance to a King Elected, Crown'd, and Acknowledg'd King by the States of the Realm, I have done it hitherto with a very honest mind, without disclaiming any ones Right or Title, which I am now requir'd to do; which is a new thing, and therefore is something more than I have been doing all this while.

A. 'Tis *saying* something more, but *doing* the same: You have, for 13 Years past, excluded, defeated, renounc'd, and refus'd, the Right of King *James* to your Allegiance and Obedience, because you have actually transferr'd them to another Person; and when he has by Declaration reclaim'd you as a Subject, you attended not to him, but told him you owed him no Service or Allegiance, but were the true Subject of the King in *Possession.* Was this to own his Right and Title? Doubtless he thought not so himself. I speak not thus, to blame you for what you did, for you did what you ought, as a true Subject, to do; but only to shew you, that you have actually, virtually, and effectually, and to all Intents and Purposes, for 13 Years space, excluded and renounc'd to the Right of King *James*, and of his Son (so thought by you,) altho' you have never done it in *Words* and *Form*: And you can by the same Principles, swear Allegiance to six Kings and Queens more, in Possession, notwithstanding the Right and Title you think the P. P. of *Wales* has, is it not so, Sir?

Q. Yes Sir, it is, if I were not to disclaim this Right and Title in Words.

A. How can you think your self at Liberty to disclaim this Right and Title in *Deed*, but not in *Words*? You *have* sworn Allegiance to K. *William*, you *will* swear it to Q. *Anne*. You *can* to the Princess *Sophia*, and her Protestant Heirs. You therefore *have* excluded the Right the P. P. of *Wales* had to your Allegiance during the last Reign. You *will* exclude his Right during the present Reign, by swearing Allegiance to Queen *Anne*. You *can* exclude his Right for the future, by swearing Allegiance to the House of *Hanover*,

ver, whilst Protestant. What is the Right of the P. P. of *Wales* to the Crown, but a Right to the Allegiance of the Subjects of *England*? This Right, you see, they have transferr'd, for the time *past*, to King *William*; for the time *present*, to Queen *Anne*: for the time to *come*, to the House of *Hanover*, whilst Protestant: And your self have joined with them, in the two first Periods, and are ready to join with them in the third, when God shall please (and we will pray it may be late) to bring it about. What sort of tenderness is this, which you seem to have for a Right and Title, which *has* taken no Place, for 13 Years past, with you? Which *will* take no Place with you, as long as Her present Majesty reigns? and which will take no Place, when the House of *Hanover* comes to the Throne, which, for ought you know, may continue many Generations, and to which you say you can submit, and may indeed upon the same Grounds on which you swore Allegiance to the late King *William*. Do you not yet perceive, that you have already done, and are now in a disposition to do, to all Intents and Purposes, what you are afraid to say in Words, *i. e.* exclude the Right and Title of the P. P. of *Wales*, for ever? Believe it, Sir, that but one Prince at a time, can have a Right to the Allegiance of the Subject: And the same Powers, that can honestly transfer the Allegiance of the Subject from one Prince to another for thirteen Years, can do it for thirteen Score, if there be the same Reason or Necessity, of which those Powers must needs be Judges. Now you see that the same Powers which defeated the Right and Title of the P. P. of *Wales*, ever since his Father's Death, have also defeated and laid it aside, du-

during Her Majesty's Reign, and the Reigns of all her Protestant Successors. You may therefore as honestly (because upon the same bottom) declare the P. P. of *Wales* has no Right or Title to the Allegiance of the Subjects of *England*, as you could honestly pay Allegiance to the late King *William*, because the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons assembled in Parliament, who gave our Allegiance to the *One*, have taken it away from the *Other*, in expres words; as well as *implicitly* by an *Act* that declares *Papists* uncapable of succeeding to our Throne. All this you understand as spoken to one, who has heretofore sworn Allegiance to King *William*, and yet believes the P. P. of *Wales* to be King *James*'s Son, and to have a Right by Blood to inherit. As for those who know not what to think of his Birth, but doubt of the Matter, if they believe in their Conscience that He who is not the certain and *undoubted* Heir of King *James* has no Right to the Crown, let them consider, whether they may not swear that the P. Prince of *Wales* has no Right or Title to the Crown, till his Birth be cleared and rendred unsuspected; let them put it upon Him, and his Adherents, to make his Right undoubted, by making his Birth and Descent from King *James* undoubted. I would not, by any means, allure a Man whose Interest disposes him, but whose Fears and Suspicions keep him back, to take an Oath, with a Mind distrustful and without assurance; and therefore I only offer these things to such Peoples Consideration: Whether they can ground an *undoubted Right*, upon a *Birth*, of which they themselves see cause to doubt? Whether a *Birth undoubted* does not (according to their Principles) give an *undoubted Right*? Whether they should

should prefer a *Doubtful Right*, derived from a *Doubtful* Birth, to the *Right* of one, whose *Birth* is *not doubted*? Whether this be not the Case of Her Present Majesty, and the P. P. of *Wales*, with those People who doubt the Birth of the Latter?

Q. But may not I believe Her Present Majesty to have an *undoubted* Right (by her undoubted Birth) to the Crown; and believe at the same time that the P. P. of *Wales* has some kind of Right or other, tho' I know not well what it is?

A. No indeed; those things are inconsistent; there is but one at a time that can have any Right to the Crown, by Birth; and therefore if her Present Majesty has an undoubted Right by Birth, the P. P. can have none at all, neither great nor small, little or much. You should therefore let your *Doubtful* Birth, yield to the *Undoubted* one, or cease to doubt one way or other. For since your *Right* is derived from your *Birth*, (I now speak as you speak) your *Right* must needs be *doubtful*, if your *Birth* be *so*.

Q. I grant his Birth to be *doubtful*; how can I then affirm positively that he has no Right or Title *whatsoever*, i. e. not so much as a doubtful Title.

A. If the Parliament, you think, had any respect to his Birth, when they used these Words; then, you see, they have declared the P. P. to be no true Son of King *James*, for they say he has no Right or Title *whatsoever*; therefore no Right by Birth, therefore not born from King *James*, and what can remove your private doubts concerning his Birth, if such a Declaration cannot? But if (as there is all the Reason in the World to believe) the Parliament had

had no Respect or Consideration of the Birth of the P. P. whether doubtful or not, suspicious or without Suspicion, but intended (let him be never so much K. *James*'s Son) to exclude him from the Crown, you are then (as I said) to consider whether a Doubtful Right (derived from a Birth which to you is doubtful) is any Right at all, compared with a Right which is not doubtful, from Birth; and whether you cannot honestly affirm, that he whose Right is doubtful, because his Birth is so, has no Right *whatsoever*, that *appears* to you. These Things I leave to their Consideration, who believe that King *James*'s Son has a Right and Title, but doubt in their Hearts whether the P. P. of *Wales*, be his Son or no. I take the Oath my self, you know, upon another Principle, *i. e.* the Perswasion I have, that the Estates of a Nation, are naturally intrusted with its Security, in the best manner they can; and that if these find themselves under an absolute Necessity of laying aside one Title, and setting up another, the Subjects are safe in point of Conscience, in submitting to their Judgment; and therefore if these Estates determine that such, or such a One hath no Right to the Allegiance of the Subject, I look upon my self as discharged, and, if commanded by them, *say* so too: This is my Opinion, which, as far as I can judge, is founded on the best Reason, the nature and design of Government, and freest from absurd Consequences; it lays the Fault (if there be any) where it should lie, namely, on those who are entrusted with this Power, and who must answer for abusing it, out of little private respects, and naughty purposes of their own: It discharges private Subjects, who have neither Leisure, Skill, nor Abilities, to consider Rights and Titles

tles of Princes: And it is ſupported by innumerable Examples, in our own Kingdom, which muſt, otherwiſe, have been frequently involv'd in dreadful Perjuries, and unavoidably ſo, with regard to the generality of the People. The Queſtion is not, Whether the Crown of *England* be not *Hereditary*; nor whether *the next in Blood* is not to ſucceed; nor whether the *Males* are not to be preferred before the *Females*. Theſe things are certain; theſe are fix'd and ſetled *Rules* with us; this is our *Conſtitution*; but the Queſtion is, Whether theſe are ſo unalterable, that no Emergencies, no Occaſions, no Neceſſities whatſoever, can juſtifie our going out of theſe ways, at any time? Whether the Publick Good, the Preſervation of the People's Liberties, Religion and Eſtates, are all to be poſtpon'd to any of theſe Conſiderations; and that for ever? Theſe Rules, before mentioned, were fix'd and ſettled for the ſake of the Publick Good, and to preſerve the People's Liberties, Religion, and Eſtates. Can they never be tranſgreſs'd, paſs'd by, or overlook'd for the ſake of the Publick Good, and for the Preſervation of our Liberties, Religion, and Eſtates? If you ſay that this can never happen, I ask you, can you paſs them by, if it *ſhould*, by ſome Diſaſter *happen*? If you can, then I am ſure there muſt be ſome People of the Kingdom, who muſt be Judges when it *does* happen.

2. You have, in a great meaſure, ſatisfied me of the Reaſonableneſs of ſubmitting my private Judgment, to that of the Eſtates of the

Kingdom. I shall give you the less trouble in speaking to the *Third* Article, which requires us to *Renounce*, *Refuse*, and *Abjure* any Allegiance, or Obedience to Him: For if *Her Present Majesty*, be the *Rightful* and *Lawful Queen*, (as is shewn in the *First* Article) no other Person, certainly, can have any Right to my Allegiance or Obedience; because I can neither owe, nor pay them to more than One at a time, and that must be to the Person whom I acknowledge *Rightful* and *Lawful*. If, again, I acknowledge the P. P. of *Wales* to have no Right or Title *whatsoever* to the Crown, (as in the *Second* Article) it follows unavoidably that he can have no Right or Title *whatsoever* to my Allegiance or Obedience; and therefore I make no difficulty of Renouncing, Refusing, and Abjuring any Allegiance or Obedience to Him. But, pray, (for the sake of some body else) what is meant by *Abjuring*?

A. Forswearing Him, Renouncing Him with an Oath. When Criminals heretofore, *abjured* their Country, they swore they would never return more into it. When Hereticks *abjure* their Heretical Opinions, they swear they have left them, and will entertain them no more: And so to *abjure Allegiance*, is to swear we will never pay any to such a One.

Q. Ay, that's the thing my Friend stumbles at: He fancies that by *abjuring* Allegiance to the P. P. of *Wales*, he cuts himself off from ever submitting to his Government, if ever God, for our Sins, should set him over us.

A. Your

A. Your Friend had best take heed of fastning such a Sense to the Word *Abjure*, in his own Mind, which it has not in it self, nor in common Construction. Does not your Friend swear to *renounce* all Allegiance to the P. P.? Does he not also swear he *refuses* all Allegiance to Him? Do not *these* Words bind him as strongly, for futurity, as the Word *Abjure*? For how long does your Friend think he swears to *Renounce* and *Refuse* Allegiance to the P. P.? tell him he *abjures* Allegiance for just that time, neither more nor less; and when he is at liberty from this Oath of *Renouncing* and *Refusing* Allegiance to the P. P. he will find himself at Liberty, the same moment, from his Oath of *Abjuring* the same Allegiance. I *renounce*, with a solemn Oath, the keeping Company with such a Man—— and I *forswear* keeping him Company; where's the difference? Will my *forswearing* his Company, bind me longer, than my *renouncing* his Company, with an Oath, will bind me? I see not how it should.

Q. But how can I either *Renounce*, *Refuse*, or *Abjure*, what may some time or other (if GOD should be so provoked) come upon me? How can I bind my self to that which may be impossible?

A. This is a Question rightly put, and lays the stress upon the *Matter* of the Oath, and not upon the Word *Abjure*, which bears no more than the other Expressions: And in answer to it, I say, that you are not understood to mean, by these Expressions, that you never will submit

to ſuch neceſſity, in caſe it come upon you. You will never court it, to be ſure, nor contribute willingly any thing towards it; nay, you muſt do your beſt, and utmoſt endeavour to keep that Day far from you, according to what your Station and your Quality exact of you. But when you have done all you can, it may be impoſſible to prevent that Misfortune, and you are not tied to Impoſſibilities, nor bound againſt unconquerable Neceſſities. When you have forſworn ſuch a Man's Company, if he ſhould force himſelf into it, and ſhut the Door upon you, would you think your ſelf forſworn for ſtaying with him? If your Superiors (who have Power) ſhould command you to tranſact ſome buſineſs of Importance to the Publick, with that Man, would you be forſworn by doing ſo? No, becauſe you forſwore his Company only, whilſt you were Maſter of your ſelf, and at your liberty to do as you would: And no Man ſwears to any thing that is out of his Power. Nay, farther yet, when a Criminal heretofore *Abjur'd* his Country, he was at liberty to return again, notwithſtanding his *Abjuration*, if his King ſhould recall him, altho' it were in his Power not to return.

Q. I will then trouble you no farther, than to ask you, in a word, what is meant by ſwearing *willingly* under the *laſt* Article of the Oath? for tho' I had had no ſcruple at all, either as to the Matter or Form of the Oath, yet I declare I had rather *not take it*, by a great deal. I never took an Oath, impoſed upon me by Au-

Authority, *willingly*, ſince I was born, and I know not who does, or ever did; if by *willingly* we mean *gladly*, and *of our own accord*: And I know not how it ſhould be done, when *commanded* us by our Superiors.

A. This is but a Word of Form, and is uſed in moſt Publick Oaths; it ſignifies that we are under no Force, or Coercion, but the Commands of our Lawful Superiors; and that we ſwear not with a *Reluctant* Conſcience, but Satisfaction and Aſſurance. We do not mean, that we would *chooſe* of our own accord to take this Oath, but that being called by thoſe who have Authority, we readily ſubmit, to give them that Security of our Allegiance, and Obedience, they require; and can do it with an honeſt Mind, and good Conſcience. But I cannot forbear to ſay, on this occaſion, that the multiplying words, that differ little in ſenſe, in Oaths, is both a fooliſh and a wicked thing. And I would I could alſo ſay ſomething to the purpoſe, to thoſe who multiply Oaths themſelves upon the People, tho' never ſo ſhort and plain. 'Tis a Liberty they will, one Day, anſwer to God for taking, without a moſt apparent and invincible Neceſſity; and I think no Nation in the Chriſtian World demands ſuch ſtrange and frequent Securities from the Subjects as ours does. When once a Party gains ſtrength, it calls for *Shibboleth* immediately, to kill the Men it hopes cannot pronounce it. But I forbear, and wiſh with all my Heart, we may no longer think of afflicting, but turn to helping, eaſing, and ſupporting one another;

ther; and that we may all of us unite in a most dutiful Affection to Her present Majesty, and give our publick Enemies no more advantages by the little Divisions we have among our selves. And if this Discourse we have had may prevent the falling off of any present Member of the Common-wealth, or encourage any one to come into the present Government, I shall be glad, and give you leave to make what use of it you shall think fit.

F I N I S.